



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
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31<sup>ST</sup> DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

## **Who first said “Damn the Torpedoes! Full speed Ahead!”? Commemorate Hispanic Heritage Month and Find Out**

### **Cosponsor H.R. 2134, the National Museum of the American Latino Community Commission Act of 2005**

*The contributions of Hispanic Americans have made a positive impact on every part of our society. Americans of Hispanic descent are astronauts and athletes, doctors and teachers, lawyers and scientists. The vibrancy of our Nation's Hispanic performers enriches music, dancing, and the arts... Latino entrepreneurs are starting and growing businesses all across America, creating jobs and opportunities. The hard work and determination of Hispanic Americans continue to inspire all those who dream of a better life for themselves and their families.*

-- President George W. Bush - National Hispanic Heritage Month, 2005: A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America. September 16, 2005.

*The oldest history of the United States is written in Spanish.* -- Thomas Jefferson

Dear Colleague:

September 16<sup>th</sup> marked the beginning of Hispanic Heritage Month, when schoolchildren across the country are introduced to food, dance, music, history and culture that reflect the diverse communities of the United States that we identify as Hispanic or Latino. This month, whether their background comes from Spain, Mexico, Cuba, Central America, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, or South America, American Latinos celebrate their common heritage of the mixture of cultures that originate in Spain, Portugal, Africa and indigenous America.

Consider American Latino contributions to the founding and development of this country and a typically American story is seen.

- Spain's King Carlos III helped finance the American Revolution. In 1779, the United States currency, the Continental, was secured by Spanish silver dollars. Moreover, residents in the Spanish towns of Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco and others paid a special tax, levied by the Spanish Crown, which went to the Continental Congress to support the war effort.
- The city of Galveston, Texas is named for Bernardo de Galvez, Spanish Governor of Louisiana in 1779; who became the scourge of the British and key ally of the American Revolution. One of the greatest impacts of Galvez's military efforts was keeping the

English in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico from reinforcing Cornwallis at Yorktown October 1781. General George Washington may have lost Yorktown were it not for Galvez.

- The famous exclamation, "Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!" was made by David Farragut, the very first Admiral of the U.S. Navy. Farragut was the son of Jorge Farragut, a Spaniard born in Minorca who came to the U.S. to fight against the British in the American Revolution and later fought in the War of 1812 as part of the U.S. Navy.

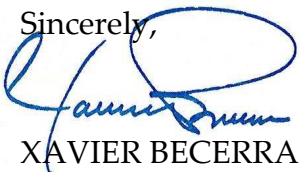
These are just a few of the facts about our shared history of which many Americans are unaware, even many Americans of Latino heritage.

When American and foreign tourists visit Washington and especially the National Mall, they expect to gain a better understanding of our collective history and culture. They see exhibits that educate visitors about our nation's miraculous technological achievements, our military sacrifices and accomplishments, and the documents establishing the most sacred tenets of our democratic traditions.

Nearly 40 million United States residents share a cultural heritage that is only beginning to be understood as wholly American, yet scarcely any of the permanent exhibits in Washington museums commemorate the American Latino community's cultural contributions. Latinos are the largest ethnic minority group in the United States. More than a third of the Latino population is still under 18. By 2025, one of every four Americans will be of Latino heritage. Children who visit the museums in Washington should have the opportunity to learn the full history of who we are and who we are becoming as Americans.

The bipartisan National Museum of the American Latino Community Commission Act, H.R. 2134, would take the next step toward ensuring that the lessons taught by our premier institutions for the arts, humanities, and American history include a better representation of Latino contributions. This effort may take some time but we hope that we will soon be able to say that the nation's capital truly exhibits America's rich cultural diversity.

If you would like to join 75 of your colleagues and cosponsor this legislation, please contact Joel Najar at 6-3748 or [joel.najar@mail.house.gov](mailto:joel.najar@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,  
  
XAVIER BECERRA  
Member of Congress